



JUDICIARY OF  
ENGLAND AND WALES

**REX**

**-v-**

**DAVID PARISH**

**Sentencing remarks of the Honourable Mr Justice Saini**

**At Bristol Crown Court**

**On Friday 23 May 2025**

1. David Parish, on 27 March 2023 you killed Beryl Purdy, having attacked her in her own home with a large golfing umbrella. Beryl Purdy was aged 86 years when she died. She was not known to you, and at the time you killed her you had been able to walk out of a secure hospital unit where you had been detained under section 2 of the Mental Health Act 1983. You are now 38 years of age.
2. You were charged with Beryl Purdy's murder. On 29 January 2024, you pleaded guilty to the manslaughter of Mrs Purdy by reason of diminished responsibility. That guilty plea followed the receipt of psychiatric reports from Dr Ahmed and Dr Sandford. These professionals each concluded that this

partial defence was available to you. The Crown accepted your plea to manslaughter.

3. I need to explain to the family of Mrs Purdy and others in court today what that means. It means that the Crown was satisfied that the evidence, taken as a whole, demonstrated that your ability to understand the nature of your conduct, to form a rational judgment or to exercise self-control when you killed Mrs Purdy was substantially impaired. The psychiatric experts agreed that at the time you killed Mrs Purdy you were in an episode of schizophrenic psychosis. That reduces what would be murder to manslaughter. Your psychosis was however precipitated by the use of cannabis.
4. So, it now falls to me to sentence you for manslaughter. My sentencing remarks will take some time to deliver. This is not a straightforward case and because there has been no trial, the full facts of this case have not been aired in open court until now. Later on today these remarks will be made available in writing for you, the Purdy family, the public and the press. I am grateful to Mrs Vigars KC for the Crown and your barrister Mr Vaitilingam KC for the help they have given me and I have taken into account everything they have said in relation to the facts and the sentencing guidelines which I will come to in a few moments.
5. The delay in sentencing, for which I must apologise to Mrs Purdy's family, is because the court has had to wait for further medical reports concerning your current mental state. In particular, the medical experts have had to assess you to consider whether you are currently suffering from a mental disorder. Last year, the experts could not agree on that issue - they were divided. So, I made an order that a further independent psychiatrist assess you. That assessment took place at a Fromside Medium Secure Unit over the last year and I have a detailed report dated 21 May 2025 from Dr Ragini Heeramun, the court

appointed independent expert psychiatrist. She has taken time to assess you and provided regular updates to me over the last year. Dr Heeramun has concluded that you are not currently suffering from a mental disorder which is of a degree requiring detention under the Mental Health Act.

6. I accept Dr Heeramun's report and I will accordingly impose a sentence of imprisonment on you today. That means that you will go to prison and not to hospital for treatment.
7. Before I turn to the facts in more detail, I want to say a few words about Mrs Purdy. She and her relatives are the victims and their voices must be heard. I have had read to me the moving VPS from Mrs Purdy's husband of 63 years, Peter. He has suffered the loss of his lifetime partner and best friend, known to him and her friends as *Bez*. Mr Purdy's health has meant he cannot be here but he is following these proceedings by link. He is reminded of the incident every time he goes into the room where she was found. This leaves him with anger and sadness and more recently, loneliness, to contend with every day. His loss is unimaginable. Nick, their son, has also provided a VPS on behalf of the family in which he describes how distressing it was to lose his mother because a door was left unlocked and a man who should have been detained was able to enter his parents' home and kill his mother in such a violent manner.
8. I turn to the offence. Mr Parish, since your teenage years you have used cannabis and other drugs. Your marriage and two children originally provided stability in your personal life and appeared to your parents to have provided a more settled environment for you. There were challenges in your marriage, which broke down in Christmas 2021. You however managed to maintain contact with your children and they stayed with you for half the time on a shared basis with your ex-wife.

9. In the early part of 2023, you formed a new relationship with Felicity. You also at that time began to experience and describe various phenomena such as something hovering outside your window, and scanning your brain. This struck your family as odd but not of overwhelming concern.
10. Your new partner told the police that your behaviour in your relationship with her had been that of a *gentle soul*. She said the relationship had progressed fast and that it had built quickly to an intense level. She described your behaviour including following her around the house and sometimes being very secretive, including deleting things quickly from your phone. On one occasion you had written a note about her on your mobile, all of it complimentary but all of it, oddly, in the past tense.
11. Felicity had been having some difficulties with her previous partner. At the same time, your behaviour had been becoming more unusual, including repeated assertions that you could hear somebody outside, and conducting conversations in whispers. She had wanted you to get some support for your mental health. Together the two of you smoked a lot of cannabis. Felicity thought that it simply made you reflective and philosophical, not appreciating that you had earlier experienced difficulties with such substances.
12. On Friday 24 March 2023, your children were staying with you. Late in the evening you again began to say that you could hear someone outside. You said that that person was saying "*David, I'm going to get you*". As you walked around the house, you were carrying an axe. You called the police who then arrived at the front door to carry out a welfare check. Both you and your partner told the police that all was well.
13. The following morning, Saturday 25 March, despite plans which you and your partner had, you left the house with an armful of clothes and your boots. Unbeknownst to your partner, you had called your ex-wife at six o'clock that

morning to tell her to collect the children because there was a gunman in the house. She did that. You then drove off in the car and were not seen again by your partner. There was then further telephone contact between the two of you with you giving some information about being in a hospital and your partner encouraging you to get the help which you clearly needed. In one of your last telephone calls to her you told her that you were not going to do anything stupid and then ended the call.

14. On Saturday 25 March 2023 there was a discussion between your ex-wife and your parents. She made clear to them that her view was that you were seriously mentally unwell. They were able to contact you and you agreed to come to their house. You began telling them that you thought that there were people “*out to get you*”. You retrieved your Samurai sword from upstairs in their house, telling your family that you needed it for protection. This type of behaviour carried on over a number of hours. Help was called for and police and ambulance staff came and took you to hospital. However, you were discharged from the hospital in the early hours of the next day and returned to your parents’ home on Sunday 26 March 2023.

15. You continued to display alarming behaviour, including what appeared to your parents to be paranoia about someone being in the house with an intention to kill you. You believed that you could see someone in the house, and were very fearful about what that person was going to do to you; and began equating bird song with messages from people who were far away. This led to the family calling for further help and a mental health assessment team attended on Sunday afternoon. They took you to the Rydon Ward in Wellsprings hospital in Taunton. Your parents visited you there on Monday 27 March and you seemed to them to be calmer. After a little time spent with them on family discussions, you said that you wanted to use a toilet and left your parents.

16. You did not return and they raised the alarm with staff on reception. The staff apologised, telling your family that the front door to the unit should have been locked. They said that the police had been alerted to the disappearance, and that you had been reported as a missing person. You had been detained in the unit under section 2 of the Mental Health Act 1983 and should not have been able to leave the hospital.
17. Shortly after you went missing from the ward you went to a nearby barber and asked to have your hair cut short and your beard shaved off. You told a doctor later that this was to avoid detection. That having been done, you said that you had no money to pay but that you would be back. You can be seen on CCTV before and after that visit. Sometime around ten past five that afternoon on Monday 27 March, you tried to pull a man, Mr Garnsworthy, out of his car as he drove away from the car park in Fyne Court, a National Trust property in Somerset. As he drove away, you tried to take hold of him by the arm and then tried to get your foot onto the sill of the car as Mr Garnsworthy drove. As he gently turned a slight bend in the drive, you fell from the car and Mr Garnsworthy was able to drive away. You told doctors that you had been told by a crow to do these things.
18. The Purdys lived close to this National Trust property. At around 5.30pm that afternoon of Monday 27 March, Peter, Beryl Purdy's husband, rang his neighbour, Douglas Wilson, to ask for help. Mr Purdy believed at that time that Beryl was out walking the dog. Mr Purdy sounded calm and said to Mr Wilson that there was a strange person in his house. Mr Wilson lives 100m away and agreed that he would go straight around. He found the gate to the utility room side of the house open which was unusual; the double doors into the house were also open and the chest freezer in the utility room was pushed

at an angle so that one of the corners was up against the kitchen door. The freezer was trapping Mr Purdy in the kitchen.

19. The chest freezer was moved by Mr Wilson to allow Mr Purdy to get out of the kitchen. Mr Wilson was told by Mr Purdy that Beryl was out walking the dog. But then the dog appeared without Mrs Purdy. So Mr Wilson went to look for Mrs Purdy. As he left the house, he saw that the Purdys' car had had a window smashed. Mr Wilson went searching for Mrs Purdy across local fields for about twenty minutes or so.

20. Another neighbour, Josh Comer, returned home that evening and parked on the Purdys' drive as was the normal agreement. He also noticed that Mrs Purdy's car had a smashed rear window and there was a brick on the back seat of the car. Mr Comer left his car and walked down the side alleyway to tell the Purdys that their car had been damaged. He knocked and shouted for Beryl and then noticed two feet with black shoes on sticking out from behind a displaced fridge freezer. He went to investigate and found that the feet belonged to the body of Mrs Purdy which was crumpled against the wall with a washing basket on top of her.

21. Josh Comer went to try help and he and Mr Wilson's son flagged down another neighbour, a doctor, John Ogle. I will not name Mr Wilson's son because he is a minor. These boys both saw Mrs Purdy's body. Police and ambulance staff were called and they sought to assist. Mrs Purdy's head was covered in so much blood that it was difficult to see what her actual injuries were.

22. Mrs Purdy's body was examined by Dr Russell Delaney who is a Home Office pathologist. His findings were that Mrs Purdy died from multiple bruises and lacerations to her face and head including a significant wound to the forehead, associated with circular depression of bone and one injury that penetrated

through the skull into the left temporal lobe. There was resulting significant subarachnoid haemorrhage. The cause of Mrs Purdy's death was identified as penetrating and blunt impact injuries to the head. Both Dr Delaney and a Dr Urankar, a neuropathologist, concluded that the effect of the assault was to cause very rapid death in Mrs Purdy. However, there were also lacerations to Mrs Purdy's arms and hands. These injuries are consistent with her trying to defend herself as you attacked her.

23. The injuries were caused by you using a large golfing umbrella to beat Mrs Purdy in what must have been a terrifying attack of this elderly and defenceless woman in her own home. As I have said, this umbrella was usually kept in the Purdy's family porch area.

24. You were arrested at 8.40pm that evening by officers on mobile patrol on a local road. You told them that you were returning home from a day of work on a nearby farm and gave a false name. The umbrella which was the weapon used to kill Mrs Purdy had on it your DNA as well as that of Mrs Purdy, and your blood was found in the Purdys' home.

25. You were 37 years of age at the time of Mrs Purdy's death and you are now 38. You are a man of previous good character - you have never had any trouble with the law.

26. I turn to sentencing. I have to apply Sentencing Council Guidelines, in particular a guideline in respect of *Manslaughter by Reason of Diminished Responsibility* ("the Guidelines"). I do not have a PSR but given the very detailed psychiatric reports before me, prepared over a substantial period of time, I do not consider I need a PSR to sentence you.



27. The first question I have to address under the Guidelines is the degree of “responsibility” you retained for the offence. The Guidelines divide the types of retained responsibility into three types: *high*, *medium* and *low*. I agree with Counsel that this is not a case of *high* retained responsibility.
28. The facts however show aspects of both *medium* and *low* responsibility and do not fall clearly into one or the other category. In a *medium* case the starting point for sentence is 15 years’ imprisonment and in a *low* case the starting point for sentence is 7 years’ imprisonment.
29. It is the conclusion of all those psychiatrists who have seen you that your psychosis was not one which was long-standing and that it was triggered by your drug consumption. Dr Ahmed comments that the illness started over a period of 10 days or more and was not sudden in onset. Dr Heeramun however describes it as being sudden in onset. I need to balance both the fact that cannabis psychosis is well-known phenomenon and the fact that you had never before been ill in this way, despite having used cannabis extensively over many years. You had in the past displayed bizarre behaviour but not to the extent that it had led to offending. You caused your own psychotic breakdown which led directly to the killing of Mrs Purdy but, when you took the cannabis, you would not have had reason to appreciate the extreme effect on you of your drug consumption. I also note that at the time of the offence you should have been detained in hospital under the Mental Health Act and should, therefore, have been receiving help.
30. These factors can be said to be matters suggesting lower responsibility. However, had you not voluntarily taken cannabis, you would not have suffered this psychotic episode. And had you not left the hospital where doctors were seeking to treat you, you would not have caused Mrs Purdy’s death. There had also been signs of psychosis recognised in the past by your

telling others that you had heard voices while taking cannabis as a teenager and in the assessment of your ex-wife who had urged you to seek psychiatric help, as had your partner Felicity at the time of these events.

31. I have taken into account what is said in particular by Dr Sandford on the issue of “retained responsibility”, but the decision as to the level of retained responsibility is for me on the evidence as a whole.

32. Standing back from all the facts, and taking into account Counsels’ submissions, I do not consider this case falls clearly into either the *low* or *medium* responsibility categories but, rather, in-between them. In these circumstances, I propose to take a starting point on sentence of 10 years.

33. I next need to consider aggravating and mitigating factors.

34. As to aggravating features, Mrs Purdy was particularly vulnerable because of her age and the isolated position in which she and her husband lived. The offence was one committed while under the influence of voluntarily consumed drugs. It involved the use of the golf umbrella as a weapon, used in a very brutal fashion. I have already noted that Mrs Purdy was conscious for long enough during the attack to sustain defensive injuries. I do not give weight to the fact that you had gone to the barber so that you could change your appearance. This is a relatively minor point and I bear in mind that you were in a psychotic episode at this time. You also took £75 and clothing from the Purdys’ house in order to facilitate your escape and you reported to Dr Ahmed that you had disposed of your mobile. Mr Purdy was imprisoned in the utility room by you. These are all minor points.

35. As for mitigation, you have no convictions. This is your first trouble with the law. I also accept that you have shown real remorse and have shame for what you did.

36. Overall, I have to take into account the considerations of punishment, rehabilitation and protection of the public in a fair and proportionate way in deciding on the appropriate sentence. Standing back from all the facts, before your guilty plea a sentence of immediate imprisonment of 9 years would have been appropriate.

37. You entered a guilty plea at the earliest stage after medical evidence. It is agreed that you are entitled to one third credit for plea. That brings your sentence down to 6 years' imprisonment.

38. I have also considered the question of dangerousness and whether, having regard to the criteria contained in Chapter 6 of Part 10 of the Sentencing Code, it would be appropriate to impose a discretionary life sentence or an extended sentence. Although you would represent a significant danger to others were you to have another similar psychotic episode, Dr Heeramun says that you "[have] been medication free since June 2023 with no evidence of emerging psychosis or evidence of any mental health difficulties requiring treatment". You have had no serious psychotic episode for the first 36 years of your life and have not shown any mental health difficulty requiring treatment for nearly two years. I have the benefit of a lengthy history of psychiatric investigation in this case. It appears that your mental health has now been stable for some considerable time. There is no recommendation for any further treatment for you, indeed, you have been medication-free for many months now. On the evidence I do not consider that a discretionary life or an extended sentence is necessary.

39. Mr Parish I sentence you to 6 years' imprisonment. You must serve two thirds of this custodial term before you may apply to the Parole Board for release on licence. 787 days served on remand will be deducted from the term. When you are released you will be on licence for the remaining part of the custodial

term. A Victim Surcharge Order will be made in the usual terms. That concludes these remarks which as I have said will be available in writing later today.